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ABSTRACT

Because student participation in the affairs of higher education has metamorphosed from a discussion level of expression to one of overt activity, the author expresses various ways in which student personnel workers may assist in preparing other segments of the academic community for the new forms of student participation. Current and historical manifestations of the phenomenon are briefly reiterated. The unique need today is for institutionalizing student participation. The students' right to participate in the total life of an instituion is considered basic to the educational experience. The student personnel division is viewed as the primary instrument in effecting this necessary reality. Five specific ways in which the student personnel worker can assist in preparing the academic community for new forms of student participation are given: (1) calling attention to old, well-institutionalized examples of student participation; (2) drawing attention to local, regional, and national examples of constructive student participation; (3) helping reinstate trust into the academic community; (4) disavowing responsibility for injurious forms of student participation; and (5) becoming involved in areas traditionally outside the scope of student personnel work. (TL)

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PREPARING THE ACADEMIC COMMUNITY FOR NEW FORMS OF STUDENT PARTICIPATION

by
Gary H. Knock

During the past decade student participation in the affairs of higher education metamorphosed from a discussion level of expression to an expression level of overt activity. Some of the results of this metamorphosis are deplorable and injurious to higher education. Others offer prospects of contributing to a revitalization of the concept of an academic community. The violent, abusive, oppressive forms of student participation which are categorized under the caption of student unrest have received considerable attention. An amplification of this topic would serve no constructive purpose. Rather, it is my intent to focus upon forms of student participation which provide promise of contributing to the academic community in constructive respects. In particular, I would like to comment on a limited number of notions regarding ways in which student personnel workers may contribute to preparing other segments of the academic community for new forms of student participation.

Student participation in many forms is a "now" phenomenon which will be a "future" phenomenon as well. Magrath (5) has stated that "There will be increasing student participation in the government of American higher education, both formal and informal." Last year, the University of New Hampshire completely restructured

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its form of campus governance. A single voting body, composed equally of faculty and students, replaced the former system of separate Student and University Senates. University of Wisconsin students serve on search and screening committees for major administrators. The University of Connecticut Board of Trustees now has a student member with full voting rights, appointed by the governor. At North Dakota State University, the Bison Board composed of the president of the university, three vice presidents, the dean of students and twelve student leaders meet in non-structured sessions to clarify issues and clarify ideas. As a matter of policy, Rutgers University has encouraged the inclusion of students on the committees of its colleges. These are but a few illustrations of contemporary forms of student participation. (2)

However, student personnel workers understand and recognize that student participation is not a new consideration without historical precedent. Students were active participants in the affairs of universities during the Middle Ages. The itinerant students of this period most certainly possessed student power. Thomas Jefferson tried to establish student legislative and judicial units at the University of Virginia but failed to receive sanction from the Virginia legislature. (1) The "collegiate way" which developed observable momentum by the early decades of the present century was a student-oriented and often student-initiated movement. Students contributed monumentally to an appreciation that the out-of-class activities of students, the extracurriculum, constitute a significant dimension of the process of education. The professional who has assumed major responsibility for student

development including student participation in campus life is the student personnel worker. Barnard College President Martha Peterson has observed, "In recent years (certainly after World War II and possibly since World War I), student participation has been formalized through student government, committee assignments and the expansion of student personnel services." (6)

Stated succinctly, student participation is not a new phenomenon. However, until the latter part of the decade of the 60's student participation has been most evident in the areas of student conduct and student activities: In some instances, student participation in these areas has been institutionalized and in other instances it has been largely informal. One of the major responsibilities facing higher education in the present decade is institutionalizing student participation. Institutional sanction must be provided for many forms of student participation. Moreover, student participation must emerge as a product of planned change. It must not be the "accident child" of the untenable alliance of an entrenched power block and an immature and often misguided revolutionary element. Instead, student participation must be institutionalized as a result of constructive input from members of an academic community working toward a goal which is recognized as legitimate and worthwhile.

What is an academic community? Membership in an academic community is limited to adults who seek learning. The term learning is defined in a broad sense and is certainly not limited to factual knowledge. Rather, all members of an academic community regardless of title or rank are learners. The hallmark of community membership is active concern for the dignity of human beings. Respect for

individuals and their unique contributions and creative expressions is a presupposition of the concept of an academic community.

Membership in an academic community is not isonomic. Not all members are held to the same standard of competence and accountability. Administrators, in particular, are asked to assume primary leadership responsibility in the promotion of institutional growth. Correspondingly, administrators assume responsibility for articulating this growth to the many publics of a college or university. All members of an academic community are equal with respect to their humanity. However, differential contributions will be made by community members because not all individuals have similar skills, experiences and responsibilities. It has been noted by ACE president Logan Wilson (7) that an institution of higher education is not a sort of experimental populistic democracy where everyone has equal political influence regardless of the issues and interests at stake.

Students comprise a vital, component part of an academic community. Students have a right to participate in the total life of an institution because the student body is a basic and permanent component of an institution. Further, they have a need to participate because involvement in the total learning milieu of an institution contributes appreciably to the development and improvement of each student's educational experience. Erwin C. Hargrove, a faculty member on the Brown University Advisory Committee on Student Conduct, has perceptively noted that college students are "developing into citizens rather than subjects." (3)

Meaningful student participation in an academic community means involvement in the curricular, extracurricular and policy-making areas

of institutional life. It is imperative that other components of the community-principally faculty and administrators- welcome and expect participation from the student body. Such action does not represent an abdication of control. Rather, it contributes to the institutionalization of student participation.

It was previously noted that student participation of a formal or informal nature has focused almost exclusively upon student conduct and student activities up until the past few years. Student personnel workers have contributed significantly to these two areas of student participation. Perhaps the task has been done too well, and student personnel workers have not received due credit for their efforts. Perhaps faculty members and even administrators and trustees are unaware of the leadership student personnel workers have provided for meaningful forms of student participation. In fact, it is probably all too accurate to state that many students are unaware of the efforts of student personnel workers to foster student participation. If student personnel work is viewed as the sentry of in loco parentis, the control value for student exuberance and the inn-keeping division of the institution, then it is not surprising that efforts to encourage students to be involved in campus life pass by without notice.

It appears that the present period of stress and strain being experienced by American higher education is an excellent time for a genuine rededication to two equally important objectives: the welfare of human beings and the progress of society. Higher education must seek more aggressively perhaps than in former times to provide not only knowledge but also assistance to students in making intelligent

applications of knowledge. It is the student personnel division which is most intimately concerned with programs of various types which are designed to provide opportunities for application of knowledge, skills and understandings. Student personnel work as a professional area has been greatly influenced by the pragmatic naturalism of John Dewey. A perceptual set of helping students to "learn by doing" permeates most if not all student personnel services. Student personnel workers were concerned with the relevance of theories, facts and systems long before the term relevant became the battlecry of either rational or radical groups associated with higher education.

As higher education seeks to define its societal identity in the present decade, I am optimistic that the mission of student personnel work will receive increased understanding and appreciation from the many publics of higher education. As student development becomes a term which can be operationally defined, increased understanding of student personnel work is bound to result. Student development certainly encompasses more than student participation. However, it may well be the leadership role of student personnel workers in the support of constructive forms of student participation which will legitimatize student personnel services in the minds of both supporters and opponents. Hopefully, the "true colors" of student personnel work will wave more exaltedly at the end of the present decade.

Now in a more specific sense, I would like to offer five notions concerning ways in which student personnel workers can assist in preparing the academic community for new forms of student participation.

First, student personnel workers can be of assistance by drawing attention to old, well-institutionalized examples of student participation. Unfortunately, many knowledgeable people within the academic community are ignorant of the well-intended and genuinely-assistive contributions which students have made. While it is true that the best examples of such contributions relate most directly to the areas of student conduct and student activities, this verity does not rule out the possibility of constructive student participation in other areas of campus life.

Second, student personnel workers can do much to increase the appreciation of academic and administrative colleagues by drawing attention to local, regional and national examples of constructive student participation. Such examples may be brought to light via both formal and informal contacts with faculty, administrators, students, trustees and other interested individuals and groups. The task is one of emphasizing the positive.

Third, student personnel workers can help to prepare the academic community for new forms of student participation by concrete attempts to reinstate trust into the academic community. This is a tall order. All of us in higher education must admit that feelings of trust and trust relationships are alarmingly absent on many campuses today. Sterile references to "the establishment", "the radicals", "the Greek groups" or "they" do much to eviserate trust. Certainly, identifiable special interest groups are present and will always be present on college and university campuses. This point does not call for student personnel workers to adopt a "head in the sand" posture. My plea, rather, is for all of us to make honest and

genuine efforts to personalize the academic community and to demonstrate that human beings are capable of trusting each other even while holding differing opinions and views. Confrontation must be replaced by open communication within an atmosphere of trust. The English historian Lord Acton offered the dictum that "Everything secret degenerates; nothing is safe that does not show it can bear discussion and publicity." Again, may I suggest that formally and informally student personnel workers can contribute to a revitalization of trust within the academic community. It is particularly crucial that discussions geared to planning new forms of student participation be carried on within a context of trust and good will. Student participation will never be institutionalized in a genuine sense if it is nothing but the end product of power politics.

Fourth, student personnel workers can help to prepare the academic community for new forms of student participation by refusing to be "scapegoats." Injurious and undemocratic forms of student activism have not been sponsored or nurtured by student personnel workers. Therefore, no apology is required for not maintaining a tighter rein on student behavior. Yes, student personnel workers are interested in rehabilitative discipline. But student personnel workers, at least in my view, should not be held accountable for student actions which are disruptive and calculated to harm individuals and groups.

Finally, student personnel workers can help to prepare the academic community by becoming involved in areas which are outside the traditional scope of student personnel work. .The curriculum and the extracurriculum must complement each other. In truth, the areas

of academic affairs, student affairs, business and financial affairs and development affairs are more often fused than they are discrete. Questions related to proper forms of student participation have not been satisfactorily answered. These questions will be answered only when administrators, personnel workers, faculty members, students, trustees and other interested entities address themselves to these queries with a genuine desire to find answers. It is inaccurate to assume that all individuals engaged in this task possess equal knowledge, experience or skill. This is really not the issue. Rather, it is acceptance of the fact that planning of construct forms of student participation will result from utilization of the particular and sometimes unique contributions of various members of an academic community.

In 1899 William Rainey Harper delivered a lecture on "The Scientific Study of the Student" at Brown University. Harper stated in this lecture that "in order that the student receive the assistance so essential to his highest success, another step in the onward evolution will take place. This step will be the scientific study of the student himself... This feature of twentieth century education will come to be regarded as of greatest importance and, in fifty years hence will prevail as widely as it is now lacking." (4)

Student personnel workers have contributed to student development and will continue to do so. Further, student personnel workers have studied and will continue to study students and student behavior in the best sense of the term study. Student personnel workers will and indeed must assist the academic community in understanding and appreciating the potentially beneficial effects of student participation. The leadership for institutionalizing student participation must come from the student personnel division.

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